



Wyoming Game and Fish Department

Jackson Region

May 2016 Newsletter



The Antler Opener

New this year, the National Elk Refuge did not allow vehicles to line up and camp on the refuge road prior to the May 1 opener for antler hunting on adjacent forest service lands. Instead, antler hunters parked on the streets of Jackson just outside the refuge entrance. The changes did not

deter anyone as managers counted 225 vehicles when the refuge was opened at 12:01 am. The change from an 8 am opening to midnight, forced antler hunters to use powerful lights and headlamps, which lit up the hillsides adjacent to the National Elk Refuge.

Enforcement officers with the WY Game & Fish, elk refuge and Bridger Teton National Forest cooperated to make several cases

against those who couldn't resist starting early. (Below) Jackson Wildlife Biologist Aly Courtemanch tags a Utah antler hunter's elk head. All antlers still attached to the skull must be checked and receive an \$8.00 WY Interstate Game Tag to be legally transported.





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Mountain Goats Captured

For the fourth straight year, Game and Fish personnel captured mountain goats in the Snake River Canyon near Alpine. The research was initiated in 2013 with a total of 18 goats captured in the area to date. The goal is to learn more about the health of the herd, their seasonal movements and survival. In April, a billy and a nanny were darted and sampled for pathogens that are known to cause respiratory disease. The local effort is also part of a larger research project called the Greater Yellowstone Mountain Ungulate Project being led by Montana State University in conjunction with wildlife managers of Wyoming, Idaho and Montana.



Mountain goats were first introduced in the Snake River Range by the Idaho Fish & Game Department over a three year period from 1969-1971. The goats have slowly, but steadily, expanded their range into Wyoming. The number of goats counted in Wyoming has grown from 24 in 1996 to 165 in 2014. The goats have also expanded their distribution, most notably north to the Teton Range.

In order to provide hunting opportunity, and help curb the growth, the WGFD offers licenses to 12 lucky hunters each year.

Photos (clockwise from top right): 1) Game & Fish Commissioner Charles Price steadies an immobilized goat before release. 2) Wildlife Biologist Gary Fralick and Game Warden Kyle Lash ear tag a nanny. 3) A nanny is released as Mike Koshmrl and Brad Boner of the Jackson Hole News & Guide record the event for a story. 4) Wildlife Disease Specialist Hank Edwards collects a blood sample. 5) a nanny before release. 6) The capture location above the town of Alpine in the distance.





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Antler Hunters Get Stiff Penalties

Game wardens in the Jackson/Pinedale area have spent countless hours patrolling big game winter ranges and enforcing the shed antler regulation this winter. Wardens have continued to receive several calls and complaints of potential antler hunting violations. Most reports of suspicious activity have been legal and not associated with antler hunting, but quite a few have not.

There have been several antler hunters that have chosen not to wait until the May 1 opener. Between both the Pinedale and Jackson regions, a total of 16 citations and two warnings have been issued to individuals who violated shed antler regulations, with four additional cases pending court action. Violators were from Sublette, Teton, and Sweetwater counties in Wyoming, as well as Utah and Idaho.

Regional game wardens are pleased to report that violators are starting to receive stiffer penalties these days, including not only the loss of antler hunting privileges, but all hunting privileges in some cases. Penalties have varied from six months to two years loss of hunting privileges and up to two years loss of antler hunting privileges. In addition, the fines have totaled almost \$4,150, with over 105 hours of community service and 70 days in jail (suspended). The stiffer penalties being handed down are thanks to the Sublette and Teton County circuit court judges and county attorneys.



Antler Stash

This picture (Left) shows an antler that had been stashed by an early antler hunter and found by South Jackson Game Warden Kyle Lash. In this case, the individual was showing some friends his find only to learn that he had violated a seasonal closure while getting it. Warden Lash received a tip that the individual had found the antler before the May 1 opener, but then later went back and stashed the antler with a plan to retrieve it on May 1. Unfortunately,

this has become a more common tactic of illegal antler hunters wanting to get a jump on the rest who do it legally. Wardens, along with federal officers, are working harder to thwart this practice. Thanks to the tip, this individual was cited and the case will likely go to court in the middle of May.



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Auburn Hatchery Day!

The Cokeville Elementary students made their annual visit to the Auburn Fish Hatchery on May 16. The inquisitive youngsters were treated to a tour of the facilities, and all the fish, by Fish Culturist Travis Parrill to learn how fish are produced and eventually stocked out to area waters. Then the kids got to learn about Wyoming's furbearers from Jackson-Pinedale Information and Education Specialist Mark Gocke.





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Checking for Aquatic Invasives

With the warmer days and the ice now off most area lakes, the 2016 boating season has commenced in Jackson Hole and Star Valley. Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) check stations are up and running for the 2016 season. Wyoming state law requires all watercraft entering the state by land from March 1st through November 30th to be inspected for AIS before launching in a water of the state.

Check station locations in Star Valley include the Salt Pass check station on Highway 89 south of Afton/Smoot, which will run 8am – 6pm Thursday through Sunday. The check station located at the Port of Entry on Highway 26 in Alpine will run 7 am – 5 pm Monday through Wednesday and 7 am – 7 pm Thursday through Sunday.



Above: Jackson Aquatic Invasive Species Coordinator Chris Wight tags a drift boat and visits with some kayakers at the Jackson Game and Fish office, above right.

Check stations at the Moose and Moran entrances of Grand Teton National Park will be operated seven days a week by the National Park Service.

Boaters can also stop by the Game & Fish regional office in Jackson (420 North Cache St.) to receive an inspection. A check station on Highway 22 at the top of Teton Pass will begin operation as the summer gets under way.

A reminder that all watercraft must have a valid 2016 AIS decal before launching on Wyoming waters.

From everyone at the Wyoming Game & Fish Department, have a safe and fun boating and fishing season!

Hitting the Snake

With the nicer weather, regional game wardens are visiting with several anglers hitting the Snake River to try their luck. Many anglers are reporting good success on Snake River cut-throats, such as this happy angler!





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Alpine Antler Rendezvous

Each year, antler buyers and sellers gather in the town of Alpine to sell their wares the week prior to the annual antler auction in Jackson. Office managers from the Jackson office will team up with regional game wardens, as well as wardens from



Afton Game Warden Todd Graham (L) and Alpine Game Warden Jordan Winter tag a merchant's wolf skulls.

other regions, making themselves available at the event to tag the various wildlife parts being brought in. Some of the items game wardens will tag include all antlers on the skull, mounted shed antlers, trophy game hides and skulls, etc. Putting an Interstate Game Tag on these items allows them to be legally transported. Game and Fish employees will typically issue upwards of 300 Interstate Game tags to antler merchants from all over the country over the course of the week.



Jackson Wildlife Supervisor Brad Hovinga tags a wolf hide as Alpine Game Warden Jordan Winter looks on.

Below is a collection of photos from the annual Alpine Antler Rendezvous including bison skulls, elk antler chairs and a heavy matched set of elk antlers being sold for \$5000. (Bottom Right) Jackson Wildlife Supervisor Brad Hovinga visits with one of the antler merchants.





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Bears are Out!

The Wyoming Game and Fish Large Carnivore section is busy trying to prevent and manage human interactions with bears, lions and wolves. In the way of prevention, Game and Fish personnel Brian DeBolt, Sam Stephens and Mark Gocke, joined by Bridger Teton National Forest Biologist Jason Wilmot, teamed up to put on their annual “Living in Large Carnivore Country” seminar in Jackson. The event continues to be popular with 85 people in attendance. Biologists are reporting few bear conflicts so far in the Jackson Region.



(Left) Lander Large Carnivore Biologist Brian DeBolt discusses lion conflict prevention at the Jackson seminar on May 12.

(Below) Photographers get a close view of a grizzly bear in Grand Teton National Park on May 13.



A New Pad for Swans

Jackson Habitat and Access personnel, Matt Miller and Brandon Werner (Left) provided safe nesting habitat for trumpeter swans in the form of a new floating island at the Alpine wetlands near the town of Alpine.

